

From: Hinson, Alex
Sent: 2017-08-23T14:36:50-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: *News Alert* Grijalva bashes review as Zinke neighbors post signs
Received: 2017-08-23T14:37:00-04:00

E&E News: Grijalva bashes review as Zinke neighbors post signs

Jennifer Yachnin

August 23, 2017

House Natural Resources Committee ranking member Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) yesterday slammed the Trump administration's ongoing assessment of dozens of national monuments as an "obvious sham," asserting the 3 ½-month review is geared toward opening public lands to energy extraction.

In a 29-page report published yesterday by the Natural Resources Committee's Democratic lawmakers, Grijalva disputed the Trump administration's criticism that past monument designations have lacked "adequate public outreach."

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is set to submit a final report on his review of 27 national monuments tomorrow, all of which have been created since 1996 and all but one of which are larger than 100,000 acres. He has previously announced a half dozen of them will undergo no boundary changes.

But Grijalva, who has been a vocal critic of the review process since President Trump ordered the evaluation in late April, asserted yesterday that its purported focus on public input "is a diversion meant to obscure the review's true aim."

"While the administration has claimed a deep desire to know what the American public thinks about our national monuments as the motivation for its review, there is ample evidence that the real purpose is to satisfy the apparently boundless demand for access to drill and mine on all public lands," Grijalva wrote.

The report goes on to accuse Interior of using a "black box process" for its review, pointing to media reports detailing "the selective meetings he has chosen to take and the brevity of those meetings."

"A review process supposedly intended to include and educate the American public that includes selective, secretive meetings and hides the results of public comments is an obvious sham," Grijalva wrote.

During the review, Zinke has visited eight of the 27 monuments. He has publicly acknowledged the process is not a "deep dive" into each of the sites (E&E News PM, June 22).

An Interior Department spokeswoman dismissed Grijalva's report as a "wild departure from reality" and "campaign literature paid for [by] extreme environmentalists."

"In addition to missing the mark on the point of the monument review — to give local communities a say — the congressman's report also fails to take into account the more than 60 meetings the secretary conducted on the ground with hundreds of local, state, tribal and nongovernmental stakeholders including environmental groups and Democratic members of Congress and state officials," said Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift.

Swift offered a list of meetings and phone calls with various officials, including Maine Sen. Angus King (I) and Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden (D) and Jeff Merkley and Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D) as well as meeting with Nevada Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto.

"Additionally, the congressman's claim that the review is driven by oil and gas exploration is laughable at best," Swift added. "The review, as was outlined in the executive order and the secretary's repeated statements and interviews on the subject, is about restoring trust and giving rural communities a voice in land management decisions. Locals are concerned about losses in revenue, agriculture, hunting and fishing, private property rights, public access to land, traditional tribal uses of the land, and timber harvesting."

Zinke has previously defended his tours of monuments in Utah and Nevada, arguing that he "shook hands with all sides."

"I've toured millions of acres on foot, rode horses, flew over it multiple times. I've done that all in a few days. I have certainly fulfilled my duty and my mission," Zinke said of his visit to the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in Utah earlier this year (Greenwire, May 11).

Neighbors' yard signs

The Environment America Research and Policy Center has launched its own last-minute campaign to persuade Zinke against shrinking national monuments — but instead of the usual radio or television advertisements, the green group is targeting Zinke via his neighbors on Capitol Hill.

The group has distributed more than 130 yard signs in the Washington neighborhood where Zinke lives. The signs say, "We Love Our Public Lands! Secretary Zinke: Leave Our National Monuments Alone."

"Americans love hiking, camping and fishing in our national monuments and parks, and we want Secretary Zinke to keep our public lands safe from mining and drilling," said EARPC Conservation Outreach Director Christy Leavitt, who lives in the neighborhood.

She added: "We are his neighbors here on Capitol Hill, and what matters most is whether he is going to be a good neighbor and steward to these treasured lands across the country."

###

--

Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior
C: 202-641-5381